



Introduction

Report to the Board of Natural Resources

In November 2004, the Board of Natural Resources (Board) directed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to report annually on the results of implementing the Lake Whatcom Landscape Management Pilot Project. This report is in response to that request.

Legislative Direction

State law, 2000 Washington Laws Chapter 205 (E2SSB 6731), directed the Department of Natural Resources to create “the Lake Whatcom landscape management pilot project” on approximately 15,000 acres of state forest trust land located in the Lake Whatcom watershed area. Two of the major purposes of the legislation were to protect water quality in the Lake Whatcom watershed and to address slope stability issues associated with past and prospective forest management. The pilot project was required to include riparian management zones for all streams; prohibition of new road construction on unstable slopes; careful regulation of timber harvest and road construction on potentially unstable slopes; development of a road management plan; and development of a specific timber harvest model for the watershed.

Board of Natural Resources Direction

On January 30, 2004 DNR released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Lake Whatcom Landscape Plan. On November 2, 2004 the Board of Natural Resources (Board) passed Resolution No. 1141 authorizing DNR to implement the plan. The purpose of the plan is to present a set of management strategies which provide environmental protection on DNR-managed lands (consistent with E2SSB 6731), while also preserving the economic vitality of those same lands for the long-term benefit of the trust beneficiaries. The Board expressed concerns over the balance of costs and benefits of implementing the plan, in relation to the State’s fiduciary responsibilities to manage for the trust beneficiaries. The Board also stated concerns about the equity of locally enjoyed benefits at the expense of statewide trusts that must pay for the increased management costs. The Board directed DNR to present a report to the Legislature detailing, “the findings as to the benefits and costs associated with the implementation of this pilot

project” That report, dated December 2004, was distributed to the Legislature. (see appendix).

Section 6 of Board Resolution No. 1141 directs the DNR to:

“... annually report to the Board of Natural Resources on the results of implementation of the Lake Whatcom Landscape Management Pilot Project. Said reports shall identify new information and implementation costs. The annual report also shall include an analysis of the management of the Lake Whatcom Landscape Management Plan Pilot Project in relation to the Sustainable Harvest and associated Forest Resource Plan (adoption pending), and in comparison to management of the remaining trust lands under DNR jurisdiction. Reports are required not later than July 1, 2005 and by July 1 of each subsequent year through 2011, unless otherwise directed by the Board of Natural Resources (see Section 8). Copies of said reports shall be delivered to the appropriate committees of the Legislature, so as to inform the Legislature regarding the status of this pilot project.”

This report is in response to the Board’s request.

Implementation Of The Lake Whatcom Landscape Plan

Interjurisdictional Committee

Consistent with legislative and Board direction (Section 4 of Resolution 1141), the Commissioner of Public Lands appointed a five-member Interjurisdictional Committee (IJC) to review site-specific activities in the watershed, and make recommendations to DNR. Nominees for the committee were submitted to the Commissioner of Public Lands by the local government jurisdictions – City of Bellingham Mayor Mark Asmundson, Whatcom County Executive Pete Kremen, and General Manager James Neher on behalf of the Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District Commissioners – and by DNR’s Northwest Region Manager, Bill Wallace.

All five committee members appointed reside in Whatcom County. The IJC members are: Steve Fox, Bellingham; Curt Veldhuisen, Bellingham; Richard (Dick) Whitmore, Bellingham; Aubrey Stargell, Maple Falls; and Tom Westergreen, Sumas. A DNR press release dated February 3, 2005 provides a short background of each committee member and an “Interjurisdictional Committee Charter” dated February 10, 2005 sets forth the responsibilities of the committee (see appendix).

At the first IJC meeting in February, the committee elected Steve Fox chairperson and Richard Whitmore vice chairperson. Also at that meeting DNR staff provided a schedule of planned management activities on state forestlands around Lake Whatcom for calendar year 2005. As of the writing of this report, the IJC has met with DNR staff four times to discuss plans for site-specific activities, has conducted two field visits and is planning a third. The IJC has reviewed and provided recommendations to DNR on three activity plans. These include:

- An easement to Whatcom County for the “High Bridge” replacement project on state forestland;
- A Road Maintenance and Abandonment Implementation Plan for the Olsen Creek area; and
- The North Olsen Timber Sale.

They currently are reviewing a fourth proposal, the Lookout Mountain Road Maintenance and Abandonment Implementation Plan.

Sharing Plans for Site-Specific Activities with Community

In April 2005, DNR staff presented a schedule of planned management activities for calendar year 2005 on state forestland around Lake Whatcom

with the Lake Whatcom Management Committee (which consists of the Whatcom County Executive, Mayor of Bellingham and the General Manager of the Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District). DNR will place a copy of this report, which includes both a schedule and map of the planned activities, on the DNR website. Detailed plans of site-specific activities will be included with the state lands SEPA documents and Forest Practices Applications. IJC recommendations will be included with the respective SEPA documents. As part of an annual meeting with representatives from the Lummi and Nooksack Tribes, DNR has shared site-specific plans in the Tribes' areas of interests, including the Lake Whatcom area.

Summary of Site-Specific Activities in 2005

DNR is currently on schedule to accomplish the list of planned management activities for 2005 presented to the IJC in February – see below (also see appendix for map). These activities are consistent with the strategies contained in the Lake Whatcom Landscape Plan and are being designed with consideration, and in most cases inclusion, of the IJC recommendations. Site specific activities planned for 2005 are:

- Auction of the North Olsen Timber Sale in November 2005. This is a 4 million board foot regeneration harvest on Capitol and Common School trust lands.
- Implementation of the Olsen Creek Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan in the summer of 2005.
- Implementation of the Lookout Mountain Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan in the fall of 2005.

New Information and Analysis

New information and implementation costs

Board Resolution No. 1141, Section 6, directs DNR to “identify new information and implementation costs” during implementation of the Lake Whatcom Landscape Plan. Implementation costs will be provided in future reports, as right now DNR is in the very early stages of implementing the Landscape Plan.

Analysis of the management of the Lake Whatcom Landscape Management Plan Pilot Project

Board Resolution No. 1141, Section 6, also directs DNR to include in the annual report to the Board “an analysis of the management of the Lake Whatcom Landscape Management Plan Pilot Project in relation to the Sustainable Harvest and associated Forest Resource Plan (adoption pending), and in comparison to management of the remaining trust lands under DNR jurisdiction.” The Forest Resource Plan, now referred to as the Policy for Sustainable Forests, will be considered for adoption by the Board in the fall of

2005. In addition to the discussion of sustainable harvest below, further analysis of the management of the Lake Whatcom Landscape Management Plan Pilot Project will be provided in future reports, as right now DNR is in the very early stages of implementing the Landscape Plan.

Sustainable Harvest: In September 2004 (prior to the Board approval of the Lake Whatcom Landscape Pilot Project) the Board approved a set of sustainable forest management policies, including a sustainable harvest level, for all forest trust lands in western Washington. The sustainable harvest model projected an average annual harvest for state forestlands in the Lake Whatcom Landscape Plan area of approximately 6.74 million board feet for fiscal year 2006, and approximately 7.16 million board feet per year for the remainder of the first decade.

DNR developed various sustainable harvest computer model scenarios for the Lake Whatcom Landscape Plan, consistent with the statewide model. The modeling scenarios were part of the analysis contained in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) of the Lake Whatcom Landscape Plan. In November 2004 the Board passed Resolution No. 1141 authorizing DNR to implement the plan with the scenario that projects an average annual harvest volume, for the first 20 years of the plan, of approximately 3.4 million board feet. DNR will integrate the Lake Whatcom Landscape Plan as it develops forestland plans at the Habitat Conservation Plan planning unit scale in order to implement Board of Natural Resources policy.

The North Olsen Timber Sale, currently scheduled to sell in November 2005, is estimated to contain 4.0 million board feet.

By July 1, 2006, DNR will prepare and present to the Board of Natural Resources the next annual report on the progress and results of implementing the Lake Whatcom Landscape Plan.

Appendix

**Report to Legislature, Lake Whatcom Landscape Pilot Project,
December 2004. Includes:**
 Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 6731
 Board Resolution No. 1141

Interjurisdictional Committee Charter

Press Release on Interjurisdictional Committee

General Plans for 2005 –list and map